development fields abroad for equity oil and gas in order to enhance the security of the country's supply of hydrocarbons. They have already entered into collaborations for exploration and production of oil and gas in Iran, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Russia, Sudan, Syria and Vietnam.

(c) Investments in overseas projects by the company are being made as per Government guidelines. These projects are governed by their respective Production Sharing Agreements/Joint Operating Agreements signed between the consortium partners and the host government. The investment in these exploration and production (E&P) projects is expected to get equity oil to augment the country's energy security in addition to financial returns to OVL. Prior to investment, during the stage of project evaluation, OVL takes into consideration various risks on account of political, regional, social, commercial, business, legal, technical and environmental factors.

National Gas Hydrate Programme

291. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that GAIL has taken up National Gas Hyderate Programme which can be a cheaper source of gas when compared to LNG to meet the needs of the country;

(b) whether any research centre has been set up in the area of gas hydrates; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Yes, Sir. GAIL is involved in the National Gas Hydrate Programme (NGHP) which is at the Research and Development stage.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The NGHP does not have a dedicated research centre but networks a number of institutes involved in R&D in this area.